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AUTHOR	Imel, Susan
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ABSTRACT

A number of perspectives on adult education are evident in the international literature, with publications from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg, Germany, in July 1997, a particularly rich source of information. A clear trend in the conference and the documents it produced was the critical importance of adult education and adult learning "for fostering ecologically sustainable development; for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social, and economic development; and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice." Publications from the conference discuss roles for adult education in achieving these goals. Lifelong learning is another clear trend in international publications; however, many policies related to lifelong learning emphasize economic issues that focus on human capital rather than social issues, a potentially negative influence on adult education. Globalization is another trend in the international literature of adult education. Globalization involves a shift toward a more global perspective and the breaking down of differences between and among nations. Issues for adult educators related to globalization are similar to those related to lifelong learning. Because it is based on economic changes, globalization emphasizes a human resource development perspective. At issue for adult educators is how to include a more holistic perspective of education into an environment that focuses on economic issues rather than on human values. (This report contains an annotated bibliography listing 17 resources.) (KC)

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Susan Imel

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

CE 080 070

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

by Susan Imel

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International Perspectives on Adult Education

Adult education is practiced throughout the world. Although the adult education enterprise varies in scope, philosophy, and structure in different nations, it is not unusual for approaches to adult education developed in one region or country to spread. Certainly, adult education in the United States has been influenced by the ideas of international adult educators such as Paulo Freire and Roby Kidd and by practices such as the English University Extension Movement, Swedish Study Circles, and the Danish Folk Schools (Reischmann, Bron, and Zoran 1999). Currently, a number of perspectives on adult education are evident in the international literature. Some of the trends and issues from this literature are highlighted in this ***Alert.***

Publications from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg, Germany, in July 1997 are a particularly rich source of information on international perspectives about adult education. Sponsored by the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), the conference brought together more than 1,500 adult educators from around the world who participated in plenary sessions, workshops, and roundtables to shape statements about adult education and develop actions for the future. A clear trend in the conference and the documents it produced was the critical importance of adult education and adult learning "for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice" (UIE 1997a, p. 1). Publications from the conference, located at the following website <www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/publications.html>, discuss roles for adult education in achieving these goals.

Lifelong learning is another clear trend in international publications. According to Butler (2000), "lifelong learning is rapidly becoming both the mantra and the mantle of later twentieth century education; it is both highly political and problematic, especially given its global spread" (p. 120). Several publications (e.g., Griffin 1999a,b; Holford, Jarvis, and Griffin 1998; Hunt 1999) suggest that adult educators critically examine ideas and policies related to lifelong learning. For example, many policies related to lifelong learning emphasize economic issues that focus on human capital rather than social issues (Griffin 1999a; Hunt 1999). Such narrow views of lifelong learning have a potentially negative effect on adult education.

Globalization is another trend in the international literature of adult education. Globalization is a complex phenomenon that is emerging from changes in the world economy brought about by advances in information technology but that also includes social, cultural, environmental and political arenas (Jarvis 1999; Walters 1997). It involves a shift toward a more global perspective and the breaking down of differences between and among nations (Walters 1997). Issues for adult educators related to globalization are similar to those related to lifelong learning. Because it is based on economic changes, globalization emphasizes a human resource development perspective. At issue for adult educators is how to include a more holistic perspective of education into an environment that focuses on economic issues rather than human values (ibid.).

The broad view of adult education and adult learning emanating from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education supports the idea that adult educators should be wary of perspectives on lifelong learning and globalization that advocate an approach to education that emphasizes economic issues over one that fosters social issues and human values. The resources that follow can be consulted for further information.

Resources

Armstrong, P., ed. ***Crossing Borders, Breaking Boundaries. Research in the Education of Adults. An International Conference. Proceedings of the Annual SCUTREA Conference (27th, London, England, United Kingdom, July 1997).*** London: University of London, 1997. (ED 409 438). <www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/scutsrch.htm>

Five adult education research groups from throughout the world cooperated to sponsor the 1997 Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA). Many of the papers address issues related to new developments in adult education research, with a particularly strong focus on formal, informal, and lifelong learning.

Butler, E. "Book Reviews." ***Studies in the Education of Adults*** 32, no. 1 (April 2000): 120-123.

Reviews two publications on lifelong learning that offer insights into lifelong learning and affiliated issues: Coffield, F., ed., ***Learning at Work***, 1997; and Coffield, F., ed. ***Why's the Beer Always Stronger Up North? Studies of Lifelong Learning in Europe***. Both published by Policy Press as part of the ESRC Learning Society Series.

Field, J., and Schuller, T. "Investigating the Learning Society." ***Studies in the Education of Adults*** 31, no. 1 (April 1999): 1-9.

This introduction to a special edition on the learning society provides a discussion and critique of the emergence of the use of terms associated with the learning society. A research agenda for lifelong learning with the following categories is included: definitions of the field, participation, learners' environments, learners' careers, time and money, complementarity and competition, and the knowledge base.

Griffin, C. "Lifelong Learning and Social Democracy." ***International Journal of Lifelong Education*** 18, no. 5 (September-October 1999a): 329-342.

Griffin, C. "Lifelong Learning and Welfare Reform." ***International Journal of Lifelong Education*** 18, no. 6 (November-December 1999b): 431-452.

These two articles describe two approaches to lifelong learning and explore the scope and limitations of lifelong learning as an object of policy. The first describes the evolution of the social democratic perspective, suggesting that as a object of policy, lifelong learning stood for little more than expanding the provision of education and training. The second paper uses the policy literature to relocate traditional policy analysis in culture, civil society, and patterns of lifestyle, leisure, and consumption and make a connection between education policy and wider policies for welfare reform.

Holford, J.; Jarvis, P.; and Griffin, C., eds. ***International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning***. London: Kogan Page, 1998.

The 30 chapters of this book are organized by 7 key areas around which the editors believe debate and analysis of lifelong learning should occur.: international policy; lifelong learning in the learning society; lifelong learning and political transitions; learning, markets,

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and change in welfare states; learning and change in educational structure; learning and change at work; and aims, ethics, and social purpose in lifelong learning.

Hunt, C. "Candlestick and Faces: Aspects of Lifelong Learning." ***Studies in the Education of Adults*** 31, no. 2 (October 1999): 197-209.
Suggests that the United Kingdom's current view of lifelong learning is shaped by an economic discourse that emphasizes the development of human capital. Proposes a view of lifelong learning in the context of community rather than employment and indicates some ways in which social capital may be generated within the framework of local communities.

Jarvis, P. "Global Trends in Lifelong Learning and the Response of the Universities." ***Comparative Education*** 35, no. 2 (June 1999): 249-257.
Explores trends of globalization, lifelong learning, and adult learning. Advanced capitalism is one result of the trend of globalization, and although higher education in western countries has responded to the demands of knowledge-based workers, some countries will not have enough workers to force changes in higher education. Therefore, transnational companies are initiating their own universities.

King, E. "Education Revised for a World in Transformation." ***Comparative Education*** 35, no. 2 (June 1999): 109-117.
The concept of lifelong learning, now an international topic of some urgency, has evolved over time according to its historical, social, and technological context. Current conditions (e.g., technological innovations) have transformed lifelong learning from its old status as an optional extra for older adults to a new role as an essential perspective in every phase of education.

Longworth, N., and Davies, W. K. ***Lifelong Learning***. London: Kogan Page, 1996.
Explains the background to the current worldwide movement toward lifelong learning and describes its significant implications for the workplace as a learning organization; for the university, the school, and the teacher training organization; for the community and the nation; and for the individual.

McKenzie, P., and Wurzburg, G. "Lifelong Learning and Employability." ***The OECD Observer***, no. 209 (December 1997-January 1998): 13-17.
Describes how lifelong learning is broader than just second chance education and training for adults; it is based on the view that everyone should be able, motivated, and actively encouraged to learn throughout life. Describes some examples of OECD member country policies related to lifelong learning.

Reischmann, J.; Bron, M., Jr.; Jelenc, Z., eds. ***Comparative Adult Education 1998. The Contribution of ISCAE to an Emerging Field of Study***. Bamberg, Germany: International Society for Comparative Adult Education; Ljubljana: Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, 1999. (ED 430 118)
Contains 24 papers from the 1995 and 1998 International Society for Comparative Adult Education (ISCAE) conferences that bring together theory and research focusing on comparing adult education theory and practice in different countries. The papers are divided into four sections: philosophical and theoretical foundations, comparative studies, problems and pitfalls in international comparison, and international societies.

Tuckett, A. ***Lifelong Learning in England and Wales. An Overview and Guide to Issues Arising from the European Year of Lifelong Learning***. Leicester, England: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 1997. (ED 424 372)
This document is an overview of the projects conducted in England and Wales as part of the European Year of Lifelong Learning. Included are eight themes that guided the work of the European Commission and its members states as they worked to promote the advantage of lifelong learning as well as the priorities of the United Kingdom.

UNESCO Institute for Education. ***Adult Education. The Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future***. Hamburg: UIE, 1997a. <www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/publications.html>
Two key documents emerging from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education were the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and the Agenda for the Future. The declaration states participants' collective beliefs about adult learning. The agenda, also developed by conference participants, focuses on common concerns and the vital role of adult learning in helping individuals face challenges with knowledge and creativity.

UNESCO Institute for Education. ***Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg, Germany, July 14-18, 1997). Final Report***. Hamburg: UIE, 1997b. (ED 419 957) <www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/publications.html>
Summarizes a conference that was designed to show the importance of adult education for the 21st century, encourage worldwide commitment to the right of adults to education, and strengthen and expand international cooperation.

UNESCO Institute for Education. ***Reference Points. The Four First International Conferences on Adult Education and Their Political, Social, Cultural, and Educational Context***. Hamburg: UIE, 1997c. (ED 410 379)
Contains information about the first four international conferences on adult education–Elsinore, Denmark, 1949; Montreal, Canada, 1960; Tokyo, Japan, 1972; and Paris, France, 1985–and their political, social, and educational contexts. Chronological summaries of key events that occurred in the political, social, and educational spheres in each of the years 1947-1997 are presented.

UNESCO Institute for Education. ***Adult Learning and the Challenges of the 21st Century. A Series of 29 Booklets Documenting Workshops Held at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education***. Hamburg: UIE, 1999. <www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/publications.html>
These booklets present discussions and presentations related to the 10 themes of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education: adult learning and the challenges of the 21st century, improving conditions and quality of adult learning, ensuring universal rights to literacy and basic education; promoting the empowerment of women; adult learning and the changing world of work; adult learning in the context of environment, health, and population; adult learning, media, and culture; adult learning and groups with special needs; the economics of adult learning; and enhancing international cooperation and solidarity.

Walters, S., ed. ***Globalization, Adult Education and Training: Impacts and Issues***. Leicester, England: National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997.

Concerned with the role of adult education and training in the context of globalization, this book is designed to examine how adult education and training for the majority of people is being shaped by the radical restructuring of the economic, political, cultural, and social life around the world and how practitioners are responding to the new and often contradictory pressures.

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The Ohio State University
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Columbus, Ohio 43210

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